

A

## D I S C O U R S E,

Delivered at DONCASTER, April 23. 1781.

Before the BRETHREN of St. GEORGE'S LODGE,

Attended by the

Deputy Provincial GRAND MASTER, the other  
Grand Officers belonging to this County; the  
Grand Treasurer of England, and several of the  
Fraternity from different Lodges in this County.

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By the Reverend WM. JOHNSON, P. G. C. Curate of  
St. Mary's, Castle-gate; and St. Olave's, Mary-gate.

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D O N C A S T E R :

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D I S C O U R S E

Delivered at Dover, N.H. April 23 1871

Before the BRETHREN of ST. GEORGE'S LODGE.

Attached by the

Existed from different bodies in this County.  
Grand Jurors of England, and several of the  
Grand Officers belonged to the County; the  
Deputy Provincial Clerk and Master, the other

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL  
WILLIAM STEVENSON, Esq; Master,  
THE OFFICERS,  
AND THE REST OF THE MEMBERS OF  
ST. GEORGE'S LODGE, DONCASTER;

'THIS DISCOURSE IS MOST RESPECTFULLY

INSCRIBED BY THEIR

FAITHFUL BROTHER,

AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

WM. JOHNSON, P. G. C.



## The P R A Y E R.

**A**lmighty God, to whom all Hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; who hast promised, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name, thou wilt grant their Request; we most humbly beseech thee, for all sorts and conditions of Men. More particularly, we presume to call upon thee for this our Society. Grant us thy grace to pay a proper regard to those solemn obligations into which we entered in thy holy name—that we may sincerely devote ourselves to thy service, may live in Brotherly Love and Charity—and in every remaining step of our Conduct through Life, may do Justice, love Mercy, and walk humbly before thee—so that at the last, an Entrance may be administered unto us into thy everlasting Kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose most prevailing Name, and comprehensive Words, we further call upon thee, saying, Our Father, &c. Amen.



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## A D I S C O U R S E.

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St. Matthew, chap. v. and part of ver. 16.

*Let your Light so shine before Men, that they  
may see your good Works,——*

**T**O a Society, the Institution and first Principles of which recommend and enjoin the constant practice of every moral and social virtue, how can I address myself more properly than in the words of my Text, “ Let your light so shine before men, “ that they may see your good works.”—En-  
\*                      A                      endeavour

deavour to distinguish yourselves by the purity of your Lives, and the simplicity of your manners—act up to the solemn engagements into which ye have entered—and when men shall see your good works—your virtuous, laudable, and exemplary conduct, it will naturally inspire them with a good opinion of the Profession.

It is indeed true, that whoever pays a due regard to the pure dictates of nature, and reason, though he may not have any connection with our Society, will soon be convinced of the necessity of practising the virtues of justice, truth, benevolence, and brotherly kindness, for the promotion, and preservation of human happiness.

And our holy religion lays us under still greater obligations to a faithful discharge of these duties. Yet to have these points perpetually

tually in view as the professed and avowed objects of our Society, must be allowed to be a very powerful recommendation of it to the notice of mankind.

There perhaps never was any Institution, human, or divine, which hath not, upon one account or another been the object of censure. There is no wonder, then, if Free Masonry hath come in for it's share amongst the rest.

The nature and chief aim of our association, if duly attended to, will naturally promote the exercise of every public and private virtue. Nevertheless, there are but too many who profess themselves members of it, that make no scruple to act in direct opposition to its excellent rules.

This hath been no unfrequent inducement to the world to censure and vilify the institution.--



tion.---And although, in reality, it deserves the highest encomiums, yet it hath met with much calumny, slander, and detraction.

Notwithstanding all this, being founded upon the firm, and solid basis of virtue, and truth, it hath continued unshaken by the most violent overflowings of persecution and oppression--unmoved by the provokings of unreasonable men---unruffled amidst the strife of spiteful and malicious tongues.

In the further prosecution of my subject, it may neither be an useless, nor an unedifying attempt, if I endeavour to point out the nature, and excellence of Free Masonry; from whence an adequate judgment may be formed, how far it merits the approbation and patronage of the world.

And I enter upon the subject the more  
chear-

cheerfully, and readily, as the occasion of our present meeting gives me an opportunity of addressing myself to so numerous, and polite an audience.

I shall therefore endeavour to give you every information in my power, as far as is consistent with the engagements I have entered into.

And, first, Masonry may be considered under two heads, viz. Operative, and Speculative. Operative Masonry, or Architecture, is that science which is exercised in erecting buildings for the different uses of civil life--whether for convenience, ornament, or defence. It enables the Artist to arrange his materials in such due proportion, symmetry, and order, as to give strength, beauty, and elegance to the whole.

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*Speculative*



*Speculative Masonry*, is that which more immediately relates to our Society. This instructs us to employ ourselves in the liberal arts and sciences. It is so far connected with religion, as to point out to us the obligations we are under to offer up that humble tribute of homage and reverence to Almighty God, which is always due from a creature to its Creator.

It inspires us with the most exalted ideas of the attributes and perfections of the Deity---and leads us to contemplate the wonderful works of nature with delight and veneration. It teaches us to subdue, and restrain our passions within due bounds---to keep them subservient to the sovereign faculty of reason---to act upon the square in all our commerce with the world---and to study to conduct ourselves thro' this vale of misery, error, and uncertainty,



certainty, in the most useful and inoffensive manner we possibly can. And further, it inculcates the principles of disinterested friendship, benevolence and charity. It directs us in a very solemn manner to cultivate brotherly love and charity---to persevere in well-doing---and to endeavour to adorn our minds by every moral and manly accomplishment. A sincere and cordial friendship cements us together in a firm and close union. A cool indifferent demeanour finds no admittance into our meetings.---On the contrary, humility and respect, condescension, and affability prevail throughout.

We carefully exclude all rancour, petulance and ill-nature, and encourage the practice of every endearing virtue, which undoubtedly hath a direct tendency to preserve  
and

and strengthen the bonds of friendship, as well as to promote mutual esteem and respect.

Being free from the least suspicion of any injurious, fraudulent, or malicious designs, we converse together with the most unbounded confidence.

In short, the pure genuine principles of Speculative Masonry expand the minds of men, and recommend every benevolent affection by which mankind are united in the sacred bonds of Friendship.

It's Precepts, if duly attended to, would eradicate every little, narrow, selfish passion; and, instead thereof, would implant the most disinterested notions,—the most generous sentiments.

Now, from this short sketch of the nature of our institution, who doth not see that it  
very



very justly merits the patronage and approbation of every wise and good man.

It perhaps may here be objected, If the precepts of Masonry be so excellent in their nature, why are not Masons more exemplary in their conduct through life?

To which I answer, that, tho' the best principles are inculcated, yet it sometimes happens, thro' perverseness, folly, and inconsideration, that men are unwilling to be guided, and directed by them.

And indeed, when we consider the vast number of individuals which form our Societies—whose genius and dispositions are as different as their faces, it cannot afford much matter for wonder or surprise, if men of this stamp are sometimes to be found amongst us.

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But it is far from being an equitable proceeding—and is absolutely inconsistent with the Laws of Candour, and fairness, to censure the whole Body, on account of the delinquencies of a few of its Members.

Though unworthy men may gain admission into our Fraternity, yet I beg leave to declare, “ That whoever addicts himself to “ vice, and immorality, is no Free Mason, “ whatever his pretensions may be.” The commission of a base, dishonourable action, is inconsistent with our principles. The chief design and intention of our meetings is to promote our improvement in virtue and knowledge---and to extend our sphere of usefulness to all men, but more particularly to the Brotherhood.

However, it sometimes happens, as I have already observed, that men, either through  
folly

folly or perverseness, do violate the laws of the Society. And when this is the case, we use every proper method to reclaim them; but if that is found impracticable, we expel them our Societies.

From what hath been said, a very clear Idea may be formed of the nature of our Society, and what sort of conduct may fairly, and reasonably be expected from every Member of it.

I shall, therefore, pass on to say a few words relative to the Secrets of Masonry.

These have furnished out a very copious topic for conversation to the world, and various, and absurd have been the conjectures of mankind about them. I have heard, with wonder and astonishment, more than once, men of acknowledged good sense, express themselves



selves upon this subject, in a manner truly ridiculous.

One concludes, that the Secrets of our Order consists of something base and wicked; and this he peremptorily assigns, as the reason why we conceal them from the world with so much care. Another, with equal confidence, and absurdity, pretends to discover, that the Grand Secret is, "That we have no Secret at all."

Now, while men will thus presume to give their opinions about things with which they are utterly unacquainted, no wonder if they make conclusions equally remote from good sense and truth,

That we are possessed of Secrets, I can conscientiously appeal to every Brother here present.----Secrets of the utmost importance to  
our



our Fraternity.—Secrets by which we can discover a Free Mason in any quarter of the globe, notwithstanding the difference of Languages, customs, and manners of the countries to which we may severally belong.

By means of these, where-ever we may be dispersed, or however distressed, we can know, or make ourselves known to a Brother, who will pity our calamities—and will readily extend the hand of Bounty to us, to the utmost of his power.

Perhaps it may here be asked, “If the knowledge of these Secrets be so very advantageous to the possessors of them, why are they not divulged to the world for the general good of Society?”

Now, in answer to this question, I beg leave to affirm, that, if the Mysteries of Free Masonry

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were once revealed to the world, the institution would inevitably be destroyed——we should want a Criterion to distinguish between a real and a counterfeit Brother, and a door would be opened for perpetual error, and imposition.

The knowledge of these Mysteries, is the only true characteristic of our being Masons—the only testimonial that can recommend us to the care and protection of one another.

This is the reason, and a very cogent one too, in my opinion, why the Fraternity have used the utmost care and circumspection to conceal them from the world—having wrapped them up in various allusions, allegories, and disguises, which cannot be developed even by those who are admitted into the Society, without good education, great sagacity, and intense study and application. It is, without



out doubt, owing to the great difficulty of acquiring a knowledge of the Myſteries of Free Maſonry, that they have been ſo impenetrably preſerved from the reſt of mankind.

Having now given you ſome general outlines of the nature, and utility of our Society—I ſhall conclude with a few exhortations to the Brotherhood.

And, firſt, Since we are Members of a Society, whoſe precepts and principles are of ſuch an excellent nature, as to require our attention to the practice of every virtue attainable in this life, “ How ought we to let our light ſhine before men, that, inſtead of vilifying and cenſuring us, they may ſee, and reſpect us for our good works.”

As the reputation of the Fraternity may ſuffer irreparable injury, from the follies and irregularities



gularities of an individual, this ought to be a very powerful motive to excite us to lead a holy, pure, and unblemished life, which will be found the only effectual method to silence the tongue of obloquy and detraction.

As we put on white gloves and aprons, as badges of innocence, may it be our chief care to keep ourselves unspotted from the world—and always preserve our consciences void of offence towards God, and towards man. All our Ornaments and Jewels are so many hieroglyphical symbols of virtue and integrity: Let these, therefore, be our constant Monitors, that they may guide our feet into the paths of purity, and peace.

Before I conclude, I beg leave to congratulate you, who are Brethren of \* St. GEORGE'S  
LODGE,

\* Constituted in 1780.

LODGE, upon your having enrolled your names in our ancient and honourable Society.

If you pursue that Line of Conduct which Free Masonry points out to you, there is no doubt but, in so very respectable a Town as *This*, you will meet with that Encouragement and Esteem to which a virtuous upright Character is always entitled.

Permit me, therefore, to recommend to you, a close and steady attention to the Rules and Precepts of the institution, and a strict Regard to the solemn Obligation which you have taken upon yourselves. Thus, shall ye give the world a convincing proof, that a good Mason, and a good Man, are synonymous terms.

It is the duty of every true, and faithful Brother, to persevere in well-doing with unre-

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mitting



mitting ardor—to endeavour to strengthen and derive honour, and respect to our Associations, by a constant and uniform discharge of every relative and social duty, suitably to our several stations, and relations in life—as loyal and good subjects;—tender and affectionate parents;—faithful and loving husbands;—dutiful and obedient children;—steady and sincere friends. Thus, shall we bring honour, dignity, and lustre to our Lodges, which being founded upon the impregnable rock of integrity, truth, and benevolence, shall continue firm, and unshaken, “until the great Globe itself, yea, “all which it inherit, shall dissolve; and, like “the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a “wreck behind.”



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